

HALL OF RECORDS
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

Twelfth Annual Report

MARYLAND STATE BOARD

OF

MOTION PICTURE CENSORS



1927-1928

OFFICE

211 NORTH CALVERT STREET

BALTIMORE - MARYLAND

Twelfth Annual Report

MARYLAND STATE BOARD

of

MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

1927-1928

GEORGE HELLER
Chairman

ASA C. SHARP
Vice-Chairman and Treasurer

MARIE WHITE PRESSTMAN
Secretary

HELEN L. ODOM
Chief Clerk

OFFICE
211 NORTH CALVERT STREET
BALTIMORE - MARYLAND

To His Excellency,

HONORABLE ALBERT C. RITCHIE,
Governor of Maryland.

The Board begs to submit herewith its annual report in compliance with law and custom.

A summary of the year's work, with other information, has already been submitted at your Excellency's request.

The following report contains a detailed statement of receipts and disbursements in the budget account, and a statement of all cash receipts and disbursements in the general account, for the period October 1, 1927, to September 30, 1928. These accounts have been audited by the State Auditor.

The sum of \$38,165.57 has been collected in fees, fines, and from the sale of substitute seals during the past fiscal year. This is the largest amount collected in any year since the Board has been in operation. Receipts for the preceding year from the same sources were \$32,498.55. Total expenditures for the above period were \$27,398.52, as compared with \$24,883.80 for the year 1926-1927. This increase in expenditures has resulted directly from the increase in the volume of business. Salaries and wages for the past year amounted to \$22,137.67, as compared with \$19,744 for the preceding year, being accounted for by salary increases among the clerical force and the employment of one additional clerk.

The excess of receipts over disbursements, as shown by the report, amounts to \$10,401.07, which sum has been reverted to the State Treasury.

The offices at 211 North Calvert Street, rented for use as a projection room and general offices of the Board, have been found inadequate due to the steady increase in the amount of work of this Commission for several years past. Available space has now been found in the building and a lease has been procured to take effect January 1, 1929, at an increase of \$450

in the yearly rental. This additional space will take care of any further increase in the volume of work for some years to come.

REPORT OF FILMS EXAMINED

The detailed statement attached to this report shows that the number of films examined was 3,903 original, and 5,474 duplicate prints, making a total of 9,377 films censored, of which 8,889 were approved, 485 eliminated, and three rejected. Two rejected films were finally passed in reconstructed form.

Films of the "Underworld" present a daily problem to the Censors; also those of the "Flaming Youth" type. The "sex plays," in many instances based upon current stage successes, require cutting and reconstructing. By adroit methods and skilful handling the industry has learned to present many subjects, ordinarily considered objectionable by the Censors, in a way to evade criticism.

COOPERATION BY PRODUCERS AND EXHIBITORS

During the past year the Board has received most satisfactory cooperation on the part of the producers, distributors, and exhibitors of films in this State.

Representatives from the film industry in California have conferred with the Board with regard to standards to be enforced at the sources of production. The producers, with a few exceptions, are endeavoring to make pictures which will meet the requirements of the various Censorship Boards throughout the country. The Maryland Board of Censors exchanges weekly reports with all other State Boards, and furnishes the same to the representatives of the industry and other organizations interested in film control.

Exhibitors throughout the State have cooperated with the Board in its efforts to enforce the law. Such violations as have occurred in licensed motion picture theatres have been the result of oversight or negligence rather than any wilful intent to violate the law. In cases of technical violations, prosecutions have not been instituted. A detailed report of all prosecutions is appended to this report. One film of lewd and obscene character was seized by the police force after having been exhibited in places other than licensed theatres. This film was not submitted for censorship, but was viewed at the Board's offices for the purpose of imposing the proper penalty.

INSPECTION

In place of the circular letter addressed to exhibitors from time to time in past years, the Board has adopted the system of stamping information upon the reel bands of censored films.

Five paid inspectors are employed to visit all motion-picture houses in Baltimore and throughout the State. Volunteer inspectors are employed in territories not easily accessible to the inspection force.

Complaints during the past year on the part of the public have been immediately followed up and some films have been re-inspected by the Board. In no case has it been found necessary to recall any permit originally issued. No appeals from the findings of the Board were taken to court during the past year.

SOUND PICTURES

The synchronized film, having but recently made its appearance, presents an entirely new problem with which the Censor Board is not as yet entirely prepared to cope.

It is predicted that in another year eighty-five per cent. of the films manufactured will be of this type. The film industry has protested against censorship of "sound" films, but recent court decisions have apparently sustained the Censor's control over "spoken," as well as written language, connected with the motion picture.

The installation of sound-on-film and disc devices for reproducing sound in connection with the projection of films at the Board's office has been delayed because of the uncertainty existing in the market with respect to machines of a permanent type suitable for the Board's purposes. It is anticipated that a great reduction in the price of such equipment will soon be announced.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board has encountered some opposition during the past year on the part of a few film exchanges with regard to the manner in which censorship seals and markings are affixed to films approved by the Board. Under a rule adopted in pursuance of Section 16 of the Act of 1922, Chapter 390, the Board furnishes a seal of approval which carries a serial number, and also stamps by perforation upon the title of the film

a corresponding number which is a permanent identification mark of the Board's approval, and which may not be transferred to another film, or any print or duplicate of the same subject. The law requires that each print or duplicate of a film be censored, and when eliminations are ordered it is required that a statement in writing be filed with the Board to the effect that the eliminations ordered have been duly made in the licensed print.

It has been found by long experience that the approval seal (four feet of film displaying the State seal) is frequently removed or lost during exhibitions outside the State, and each year approximately one thousand films are returned to this office for the purpose of having substitute seals issued. This is done at a cost of one dollar each. The Board, upon examining the film and ascertaining that the perforated identification mark is in the title, immediately issues a seal to the applicant. In this way great inconvenience and loss are spared the exhibitor, who would otherwise be obliged to have the film re-censored.

The Board has conferred with the Attorney General and a bill has been prepared to be presented to the Legislature in January, 1929, which specifically gives the Board the power to stamp "by perforation or otherwise," a simple device such as is now used to identify censored prints. The present law authorizes the Board to "stamp" films, and in using the perforating machine the Board has employed the method generally in use by Vitaphone and other companies for their own purposes in marking films, including synchronized prints. This system has made possible the careful check kept on films exhibited in this State. The total number of films submitted for censorship in 1918-1919, prior to the adoption of this system, was 3,123, as compared with 9,377 films submitted in 1927-1928. This increase represents more than the normal increase in business during this period of time and must be attributed largely to the cooperation of exhibitors who refuse to show films in their theatres which are not marked in accordance with the rules of the Board.

A further change in the manner of charging for the censorship of films has been incorporated in the proposed law. It has been found that the usual one thousand feet of film contained on a reel is now reduced in the case of sound films to approxi-

mately eight hundred feet, by reason of the thickness of the film. It is proposed to charge by measurement, allowing one thousand feet of film, in place of one reel, for a fee of \$2.00 for originals, and \$1.00 for duplicates. The proposed law further provides that duplicate prints may be submitted at any time within one year after the original print is censored. The law at present requires that all such applications be made at the same time and by the same person. With the added precaution of careful measurement, it is expected that duplicates submitted by the original applicant within the period of one year can be properly checked by the Board. In some cases as many as a dozen duplicates of one subject are used in the State.

Respectfully submitted,

GEORGE HELLER, *Chairman*

ASA C. SHARP, *Vice-President*

MARIE W. PRESSTMAN, *Secretary*

December 31, 1928

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

REPORT OF FILMS EXAMINED

OCTOBER 1, 1927—SEPTEMBER 30, 1928

	Films Original	Films Duplicate	Reels Original	Reels Duplicate	Films Approved	Films Rejected	Films Eliminated
October -----	314	486	1,002	1,131	749	0	51
November -----	314	470	1,078	1,259	726	0	58
December -----	353	451	1,117	1,066	751	0	53
January -----	357	480	1,157	1,277	789	1	47
February -----	285	434	774	1,032	701	0	18
March -----	327	367	960	989	667	0	27
April -----	274	374	766	949	615	0	33
May -----	344	491	1,049	1,151	776	0	59
June -----	328	433	878	914	732	2	27
July -----	338	426	937	956	700	0	64
August -----	327	502	945	1,404	796	0	33
September -----	342	560	992	1,620	887	0	15
	3,903	5,474	11,655	13,748	8,889	*3	485

* One film finally rejected. Two passed in reconstructed form.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

Films, Original -----	3,903		
Films, Duplicate -----	5,474		
Reels, Original -----		11,655	
Reels, Duplicate -----		13,748	
Films Approved -----			8,889
Films Rejected -----			3
Films Eliminated -----			485
	9,377	25,403	9,377

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS
STATEMENT OF CASH RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS
For Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1928

Receipts

Fees, Original Reels, 11,655 at \$2.00 -----	\$23,310.00	
Fees, Duplicate Reels, 13,748 at \$1.00 -----	13,748.00	
Fees, Substitute Seals, 897 at \$1.00 -----	897.00	
Fines -----	100.00	
Telephone Calls -----	42.25	
Interest on Deposit -----	38.51	
Refund, Traveling Expenses -----	29.81	
		<u>\$38,165.57</u>

Disbursements

Remitted to State Treasurer -----	\$38,164.57	
Balance due Comptroller -----	1.00	
		<u>\$38,165.57</u>

Bank Reconciliation

Union Trust Company:	
Balance, September 30, 1928 -----	\$3,729.25
Check No. 73 Remitted to Treasurer Out- standing -----	3,729.25

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS

BUDGET ACCOUNT

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND DISBURSEMENTS

For Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 1928

Receipts

Balance, September 30, 1928		\$400.00	
State Treasurer, Direct	\$25,786.82		
State Treasurer, through Comptroller	1,611.70		
Budget Account Transfer and Refund	336.17		
		<u>27,734.69</u>	\$28,134.69

Disbursements

Salaries and Wages	\$22,137.67		
General Repairs	42.00		
Light, Heat, and Power	302.60		
Traveling Expenses	573.73		
Communication	316.24		
Office Supplies and Stationery	211.67		
Printing	71.60		
Motion Picture Machine Supplies	115.13		
Office Equipment	32.90		
Motion Picture Equipment	21.95		
Rent	1,950.00		
Insurance	30.00		
Budget Account Transfer	317.50		
		<u>\$26,122.99</u>	

Paid Through Comptroller

Film Approval Seals	\$1,299.38		
Printing	172.50		
Office Equipment	133.56		
Office Supplies and Stationery (C. P. B.)	6.26		
		<u>1,611.70</u>	\$27,734.69
Balance, September 30, 1928			<u>\$400.00</u>

Bank Reconciliation

Union Trust Company:		
Balance, September 30, 1928, as per Bank Statement		\$400.00
No Checks Outstanding		

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF MOTION PICTURE CENSORS
RECORD OF PROSECUTIONS FOR YEAR 1927-1928

Date	Title of Film	Where Exhibited	Nature of Offense	Imposed Fine
12-20-27	Whispering Sage	Roosevelt, Baltimore	Uncensored	\$50.00
9-10-28	Dempsey-Sharkey Fight	Flag, Baltimore	Uncensored	25.00
9-10-28	Dempsey-Sharkey Fight	Flag, Baltimore	Uncensored	25.00
12-22-27	Half Pint Hero	Regent, Baltimore	Uncensored	\$50.00

(An appeal was taken in this case, and no fine collected.)